



**EPAP** EXPANDED PROFESSIONAL  
ASSOCIATES PROGRAM

## **ANNOUNCING THE 2014 OPEN SEASON OF THE EXPANDED PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATES PROGRAM (EPAP)**

**REFERENCE:** [INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATES](#)

**SUMMARY:** The Department is pleased to announce the start of the 2014 Open Season of the Expanded Professional Associates Program (EPAP). This document provides detailed information on the program application process for first-time applicants and explains the process for individuals who have already received qualification to the program and/or wish to request additional qualifications. Information for HROs and other Business Writing Test proctors is also included. There are substantive changes to the application process this year. Be sure to review this message carefully. For a program overview and eligibility requirements please see the [INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATES](#) document posted online.

**1. All eligible AEFMs interested in participating in EPAP are encouraged to apply for qualification to the program during this open season. Positions may become available between open seasons and having a pool of qualified candidates allows for vacant positions to be filled immediately.**

**2. APPLICATION PROCESS:** There are two steps to apply for qualification to the program:

Step 1 - Complete and pass an online Business Writing Test administered by ACT, Inc.

Step 2 - Submit a completed application package, including required documents (see the [referenced document](#) and below) via USAJobs.gov. A vacancy announcement will be issued in early March.

**3. BUSINESS WRITING TEST INFORMATION:** The Department has contracted with ACT, Inc., which will provide electronic exam delivery and scoring. The Business Writing Test is taken electronically, via the internet either in the U.S. at a PSI Test Center, or overseas proctored by the Human Resources Office in a U.S. Mission.

The exam tests applicants' business writing skills by presenting them with a common workplace situation and asks them to write a response addressing the situation. The test evaluates a variety of writing components, to include sentence structure, mechanics, grammar, word usage, tone and word choice, organization and focus, and development of ideas. It requires standard business English, defined as writing that is direct, courteous, grammatically correct, and not overly casual. The exam lasts approximately 30 minutes.

Information on what the test measures, common errors and test scoring is available on ACT's website at:

[http://www.act.org/workkeys/assess/bus\\_writ/](http://www.act.org/workkeys/assess/bus_writ/)

**4. TEST REGISTRATION:** Individuals who have passed the test previously during any EPAP Open Season from October 2008 through February 2013, **do not/not need** to re-take the test; the score is valid for the duration of the program. If individuals are not certain of their score, they may email [FLOaskEPAP@state.gov](mailto:FLOaskEPAP@state.gov) and provide the year they believe they took the test and HR/FLO will verify their test score.

Applicants who have not previously passed the Business Writing Test must provide HR/FLO some basic information (see below). Once HR/FLO confirms an applicant's eligibility, they will receive a link to ACT's registration site and an eligibility code they will have to enter when they self-register with ACT. If testing overseas, they must also provide the name of post and the name and email address of post's Human Resources Officer or name and email address of the person designated by the HRO to proctor the test to ACT.

Applicants should go to the EPAP internet site:

<http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c41174.htm> and click on the posted link for test registration details. They will be asked to provide the following information:

- Applicant's full name
- Applicant's primary email address
- Applicant's secondary email address
- Sponsoring employee's full name
- Sponsoring employee's agency
- Testing location (domestic or overseas)
- If overseas, the name of post and the name and email address of post's Human Resources Officer or name and email address of the person designated by the HRO to proctor the test.

AEFMs wishing to take the Business Writing Test this cycle must request registration information through FLO's website (see Test Registration Details at the link paragraph 4 below) no later than 5:00 p.m. EST Wednesday, February 19, 2014. This allows sufficient time for HR/FLO to confirm an applicant's eligibility, provide the applicant their eligibility code, instructions on how to complete registration, and the link to ACT, Inc.'s site. Registration with ACT must be completed by 5:00 p.m. CST on Friday, February 21, 2014.

**Note: The Business Writing Test must be completed by February 28, 2014.**

If an applicant is retaking the Business Writing Test (because he/she did not pass in a previous open season), the request for registration must be under the same name used when the original test was taken.

Applicants may only take the test once per open season. If they do not pass the Business Writing Test during this open season they must wait until the following open season to re-take the test.

Only those applicants who pass the Business Writing Test are eligible to continue the application process and submit an application package via USAJobs.gov.

**5. TESTING IN THE U.S.:** If applicants will be testing in the U.S., an email will be automatically sent from ACT confirming the successful completion of their test registration. The e-mail will also inform them that they will receive a second e-mail from [support@psionline.com](mailto:support@psionline.com). Once applicants receive their username and password, they will be able to login online and schedule their testing appointment at a PSI U.S. test center. **Note:** PSI Test Centers are not open on Sundays and certain weekends during the testing period. See paragraph 7 below.

PSI Test Centers are located throughout the United States. At the time the applicants schedule their exam appointment on PSI's website, they will be given the list of test sites available.

**6. TESTING OVERSEAS:** If the applicant will be testing overseas, an e-mail will be automatically sent from ACT confirming the successful completion of his/her test registration. The e-mail will also confirm the name of the proctor provided during registration. *It is the responsibility of the registrant to contact the proctor to arrange a mutually convenient date and time for the applicant to take the test. The e-mail will provide the applicant with his/her username and password for launching the exam session.*

**7. INFORMATION FOR HROS/TEST PROCTORS OVERSEAS:** Human Resources Officers at post are responsible for proctoring the EPAP Business Writing Test or for designating another American at post to do so. The proctor must be a U.S. citizen.

When an applicant registers for the exam and provides the name and address of the post proctor, ACT will send a separate e-mail to the overseas proctor with the required URLs for test delivery as well as three instruction documents:

- Operations Manual
- Training Tutorial
- Examinee Agreement and Sign-In (EASI) form

*It is the responsibility of the registrant to contact the proctor to arrange a mutually convenient date and time for the applicant to take the test.*

ACT has advised it will be upgrading file servers and systems hardware from 5:00 p.m. (CT) Friday through 6:00 a.m. (CT) Monday on the following weekends:

- Friday, February 14 - Monday, February 17
- Friday, February 21 - Monday, February 24

ACT also has a monthly IT Maintenance software upgrade window scheduled for 5:00 p.m. (CT) Friday through 5:00 p.m. (CT) Sunday on:

- Saturday, February 22 ? Sunday, February 23

**Please do not schedule test appointments during these times as its test delivery system will be unavailable during these windows.** PSI has blocked these windows from domestic registrants being able to schedule their exam appointment during these windows. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.

To complete the Business Writing Test, an applicant must have access to a computer with Internet connection and a steady power supply. Posts that lack a steady power supply or have only dial-up Internet connectivity may experience difficulty administering the exam.

The ACT website: [www.act.org/workkeys/tech/index.html](http://www.act.org/workkeys/tech/index.html) lists specific browser settings and other technical requirements. It is not necessary to restrict access to other websites on the testing computer; rather, it will be the proctor's responsibility to monitor website usage.

**8. TEST RESULTS AND NEXT STEPS:** Scores will be reported by ACT directly to HR/FLO, not to the applicant. Applicants will be advised by HR/FLO, approximately 7 to 10 days after they have taken the exam whether they have passed the test. HR/FLO will not report a numerical score, only a pass or fail result. Applicants who do not pass the Business Writing Test will not be eligible for further consideration this open season. Those who do not pass the Business Writing Test during this open season must wait until the following open season to re-take the test.

Individuals should not contact ACT to ask for their scores. ACT will refer them to the [FLOaskEPAP@state.gov](mailto:FLOaskEPAP@state.gov) mailbox. Going to ACT only delays requests.

**9. SUBMITTING APPLICATIONS:** After a thorough review of the EPAP application procedures, including discussions with the EPAP Bureau Representatives and feedback from FY2013 applicants, HR/FLO has developed a new process that provides a secure method to submit applications. This open season, individuals will respond to a vacancy announcement and submit via <https://www.usajobs.gov/>

- A USAJobs Resume;

- A copy of their sponsoring employee's assignment notification/cable listing the AEFM as a dependent and post of assignment;
- Legible copies of U.S. college/university transcript(s) that include degree(s) (if any) awarded and course work completed and/or foreign education credential evaluations;

Foreign education transcripts will not be accepted. Applicants will submit copies of their foreign education credential evaluations in lieu of transcripts in their applications. See the [referenced document](#) for further information on the credential evaluation process.

- Veteran's preference will be applied in the selection process, consistent with the application of veteran's preference in all overseas employment, as documented by HR/OE. Those claiming veteran's preference must submit a copy of their DD-214 with their application; this is required of those who are preference eligible.
- Medical professionals must include a copy of their current U.S. medical license with their online applications.

Applicants will also respond to a set of questions that confirms their eligibility to the program, provides a condensed version of their education and work experience and allows them to indicate for which available positions they wish to be considered. This process closely approximates the application process for Foreign Service Specialists and most federal employment and further strengthens the professionalism of the program.

Once applicants have been advised by HR/FLO that they have passed the Business Writing Test, and the vacancy announcement has been released (**early March 2014**), applicants may submit their full application package via USAJobs.gov.

Information and suggestions on what applicants can do now to prepare their applications is detailed in the [referenced document](#). Applicants should allow at least three to four hours to complete their application package and are encouraged not to wait until the deadline to submit their applications.

**The application deadline is 11:59 p.m. eastern time Friday, March 21, 2014. Any applications received after this deadline will not be considered.**

**10. APPLICANTS SEEKING ADDITIONAL QUALIFICATIONS:** Individuals who applied in any previous EPAP open season and wish to request qualification in additional areas and/or were not found eligible, have additional work or educational experience that would support their request and wish to be re-evaluated must submit an application via USAJobs.gov including all required documentation. See paragraph 9 above. They are **not** required to retake the business writing test.

**11. PREVIOUSLY QUALIFIED APPLICANTS:** Individuals who applied in any previous EPAP open season and were found eligible by the Qualifications Evaluation Panel (QEP), **do not/not need** to retake the Business Writing Test or re-apply for qualification.

The Regional Bureaus are creating a list of positions that HR/FLO will post online at <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c41174.htm> in **February**. Once the list is posted, if there is a position individuals are interested in at their post, in an area in which they have already been qualified, they must submit a DS-174, available online at the address below, to the appropriate Regional Bureau Representative (see paragraph 18 below) expressing their interest in consideration for the position(s).

<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/136408.pdf>

**12. REVIEW PROCESS:** HR/FLO will convene Qualification Evaluation Panels (QEPs) to review applications submitted by eligible candidates. The QEP will evaluate each candidate as either qualified or not qualified for the area(s) to which they applied. Once the QEPs have finished their evaluation, HR/FLO will send applicants email notification of the results of their review. HR/FLO will also forward the applications of qualified applicants to the respective Regional Bureaus. *Qualification for an area does not guarantee an offer of employment.*

**HR/FLO hopes to provide notification by mid-May 2014.**

13. **SELECTION:** Regional Bureaus will make all final hiring and salary decisions based on a range of factors. However, bureaus are not authorized to offer a position to a candidate until after the sponsoring employee has been paneled or it is verified that the sponsoring employee has a tour of duty that will permit the applicant to serve a full year. More positions than can be filled will be advertised because there is no guarantee that there will be a qualified family member available at post at the right time to apply for every position. Due to the limited number of positions worldwide, bureaus may not be able to fill an advertised position even if there are candidates at post who are qualified.

14. **UPON SELECTION:** EPAP AEFMs will be hired using the Family Member Appointment (FMA) mechanism. The regulations governing FMAs are contained in 3 FAM 8120. Information on the FMA is available online:  
<http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21641.htm>

Applicants do not need to have a security clearance at the time of application. Selected applicants however, are required to obtain the appropriate security clearance for the position by the time of their appointment. Those who do not hold active security clearances must inform the regional bureau or post Human Resources Office promptly after their selection. The post or hiring bureau will initiate the clearance process with Diplomatic Security but will require prompt cooperation and input from the candidate. The candidate may not be brought on board until s/he receives a minimum of an appropriate interim clearance for the position.

In conjunction with post's bureau, the post RSO will determine the level of security clearance required for the position and whether the incumbent may be appointed with an interim clearance. The clearance level required for each position is based on the duties and responsibilities of the position and is not based on the individual. As with any EFM overseas, EPAP AEFMs must be medically cleared for post. Applicants are reminded to update their medical clearances in a timely manner.

All applicants must commit to serve a minimum of one year from the date of hire (not the date of the conditional offer) in the position for which they are selected. The same is true for those who are already at the post where the EPAP position is being advertised. If the AEFM cannot obtain the required clearance in time to



comply with the one-year requirement, the bureau will rescind the offer of employment. On the effective day of hire, the candidate's sponsoring employee must have at least one year remaining of his/her tour of duty.

Applicants may be able to serve up to the maximum of their sponsoring employee's tour of duty, provided sufficient funding is available, the bureau wishes to renew the position, and their supervisor documents their performance as satisfactory or better. As with any limited non-career appointment, there is an absolute maximum term of five years.

**15. EXPECTATIONS OF SELECTED APPLICANTS:** Positions offered within the EPAP Program are professional-level, full-time positions. Selected applicants may request accrued annual leave and LWOP may be granted at the discretion of the post. All extended leave requests must be approved in advance by the employee's supervisor at post and the regional bureau. EPAP AEFMs will be evaluated annually using form JF-57, Performance Appraisal for AEFMs.

**16. SALARY, BENEFITS, AND ALLOWANCES:** Salary will be determined at the time an offer of employment is made. It will be determined by a bureau HR Specialist based on the advertised grade of the position and the individual's educational background and work experience. The EPAP Regional Bureau Representative is responsible for authorizing the highest previous rate (HPR), if applicable. An AEFM that is hired under EPAP will receive the Foreign Service Comparability pay as a "direct-hire." An individual may not be paid at a grade higher than the advertised grade of the position which s/he will encumber. The EPAP Regional Bureau Representative may offer the position at the Training Level and the incumbent would be able to convert to the next grade after successfully completing 52-weeks at the Training Level. Conversion to FP-04 Full Performance Level (for applicable FP-04 positions) will only take place after successfully completing 18 months at the FP-05 Training Level.

EPAP AEFMs will accrue leave at the same rate as direct-hire employees. EPAP AEFMs will be able to pay into the Thrift Savings Plan, FEGLI, FEHB, and FERS. They may also be eligible to receive [Non-Competitive Executive Order 12721 Eligibility](#) after 52 weeks of government service. EPAP AEFMs can receive over-time pay but it must be paid out of post funds and must be requested and authorized in accordance with post procedures.

EPAP AEFMs are personally eligible to receive danger pay but no other allowances, differentials, or other benefits (including but not limited to, post differential, temporary lodging, living quarters, transfer, home service transfer, education, and separate maintenance allowances, advances of pay, home leave, and rest and recuperation). They will not be granted any entitlements, such as shipment of household goods or housing, in addition to those already granted to their sponsoring employee. EPAP AEFMs at unaccompanied posts must be included on their sponsoring employee's travel orders and may not accept Separate Maintenance Allowance (SMA) once they have commenced travel to post.

Note: For those who are currently in a civil service position, their appointment will be converted to a Family Member Appointment.

**17. TRAINING:** AEFMs hired under this program will be expected to take any related training courses at their own expense. However, if an AEFM is hired and already working and a post wishes to fund travel for an AEFM to take a course at FSI, salary will continue to be paid during the training period. If an employee has been selected for a position but has not yet gone to post, salary will not be paid during the training period. Training should be planned in conjunction with R&R or home leave travel whenever possible. Applicants should contact EPAP Regional Bureau Representatives directly for information on recommended training for advertised positions.

Some positions advertised may indicate a required or preferred language skill. Language training will continue to be provided to EFM's on a space-available basis only. Individuals selected for this program will generally have priority over other EFM's for language and functional training enrollment, but there is no guarantee that space will be available. Applicants should contact the Family Liaison Office (FLO) at [FLOASKTraining@state.gov](mailto:FLOASKTraining@state.gov) for more information regarding training enrollment.

**18.** Each Regional Bureau will answer candidate's questions on specific positions advertised by region. Please contact the appropriate Regional Bureau Representative at the address below:

[AF-EPAP@state.gov](mailto:AF-EPAP@state.gov)

[EAP-EPAP@state.gov](mailto:EAP-EPAP@state.gov)

[EUR-IO-EPAP@state.gov](mailto:EUR-IO-EPAP@state.gov)

[NEA-EPAP@state.gov](mailto:NEA-EPAP@state.gov)

[SCA-EPAP@state.gov](mailto:SCA-EPAP@state.gov)

[WHA-EPAP@state.gov](mailto:WHA-EPAP@state.gov)

19. For general information, including Frequently Asked Questions, please see FLO's website: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c41174.htm> or contact [FLOaskEPAP@state.gov](mailto:FLOaskEPAP@state.gov).